



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

First and foremost, I hope that you took the opportunity to take some well-deserved time off with your loved ones over the summer months. With all the hassle and stress that comes with work, the summer period is an ideal time to rest and recharge, and to enjoy some sunshine before returning to work.

Since my last message, things have unfortunately taken a turn for the worse for many of our members working at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The employer has imposed a moratorium on the administrative conversion of term employees. The service performed by these employees will therefore not count towards the three (3) years of cumulative service required for administrative conversion to indeterminate (permanent) status, until the moratorium is lifted. We believe this was a hasty and premature decision, and our union strongly disagrees with it. We will continue to put pressure on the Agency to lift the moratorium as quickly as possible.



Continuing in the same vein, CRA announced on May 1, in an underhanded move and without any consultation with our union, that it would not be renewing the contracts of 2,000 of our term members working in its Contact Centres, whose contracts were due to expire on May 10. Quite the short notice for these loyal employees who helped the employer during the pandemic! This clearly shows a lack of class and respect. I say "in an underhanded move" because the Agency tried to bury the issue by announcing this bad news to affected employees on the same day that it casually announced, without consultation, that most of its remaining employees would have to report to the office in person for a minimum of three days a week as of September 9, 2024. The CRA



followed Treasury Board's lead without any delay and without any discussion with the two unions representing the vast majority of its employees.

And all this was announced on May 1, International Workers' Day. What a slap in the face and an

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**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ RECEVOIR CETTE PUBLICATION EN FRANÇAIS,
VEUILLEZ VOUS ADRESSER À VOTRE PRÉSIDENT- E DE SECTION LOCALE**

incredible lack of respect! Again!

What's more, the employer even contemplated suspending its employee recognition program for long years of service and retirement. After a forceful and swift intervention by our union, the employer abandoned this idea, maintaining the program and is currently conducting consultations on the matter. We will certainly follow up on this issue.

Given the employer's repeated lack of respect for our members and our union, we asked you to boycott **all activities organized by the Canada Revenue Agency in connection with *National Public Service Week 2024***. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members who refused to participate in these activities, to clearly show the Agency's leadership that you are frustrated and frankly disgusted by their lack of respect, consideration and recognition for you, its employees.

In addition, the Executive Council of the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) has decided that our union representatives would withdraw from all formal Union-Management Consultation meetings at national, regional and local levels, and also withdraw our support, adherence and participation in the Union-Management Approach (UMA) until further notice. UMA has been in place for many years and promotes informal conflict resolution at the lowest possible level of union and management. While our union strongly believes in this approach, it has become clear that the employer does not, which has forced us to put it on hold for the time being.

The federal government and the CRA evidently don't give a damn about the well-being of their employees. With their decision to force most of you to come into the office in person at least three (3) days a week, they preferred to keep the Chambers of Commerce and business lobbies, as well as municipal and provincial politicians, happy.



To hell with the consequences for your quality of life, your work-life balance and your family!

To hell with the environmental consequences!

This is a purely political decision, made in the spur of the moment, that makes no sense whatsoever. In fact, the federal government has significantly reduced the number of buildings it owns or leases. It was talking about transforming federal buildings into affordable housing to help Canadians cope with the serious

housing crisis. What's more, the government says it wants to take action to combat the climate crisis. Under these circumstances, it makes no sense to force hundreds of thousands of employees to travel unnecessarily to the office to "work collaboratively" even though the majority of employees on a team don't work on the same floor, in the same building, in the same city, or in the same province!!!! But that's all right. All you have to do is take part in *Microsoft Teams* virtual meetings at the office, even if you can do the same damn thing from home! That's what we call the "madhouse"! But never mind, the government wants you to "drive the economy" of these beloved downtown areas...

Many of you are furious, and rightly so. We understand and share your frustration.

The employer is well aware that the vast majority of you are strongly opposed to this decision. In

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MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION EVENTS

Now you may have heard this term or others such as local pizza day, family picnic, local barbecue, ice cream day, or other events sponsored by the local union.

Membership Appreciation Events are funded by and held for the members of the particular UTE local. These functions are organized for the members or the members and their families, as a recognition of the hard work that all the members do in order to make our union strong. This work does not go unnoticed, and locals take pride in being able to give back to the membership through relaxing fun filled events for a few hours or in some cases the better part of a day.

Events take place throughout the year with many taking place during warmer weather and others take place indoors as the weather turns to fall or winter.



Funds are made available from UTE National to assist locals to put on these events. At the UTE National Convention which took place in August 2023, a resolution was passed that provides up to \$1,500 in assistance to a local to put on such an event. The requirement for the local is that they will receive financial assistance equal to the amount of funds spent on the event based on a dollar-for-dollar formula up to a maximum \$1,500. Thus, if a local expended \$4,000 to put on an event, they would be entitled to a subsidy from UTE in the amount of \$1,500. This assures that the locals have sufficient funds to put on a great event for their membership.

If your local has not put on such an event recently or if you are unaware of any event that may be scheduled in the future, consider reaching out to your local executive and inquire if such an event is being scheduled before the end of the year. If the response is that nothing is being scheduled, it certainly does not hurt to ask why not?

This truly is a meaningful way for the union to thank the membership for their hard work and dedication. It is surely something that the union should do to express to our members how important they are to us.



Gary Esslinger
Chair, Communications Committee

fact, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) conducted a survey and nearly 95% of UTE members who responded indicated that they were against the CRA's decision. We told the employer as much. We also joined a petition launched by the major federal public service unions, and tens of thousands of public service employees answered the call and completed the petition.

As you read these lines, some of you will already have been affected by this measure, while others will not yet be, simply because the employer doesn't have enough space on its premises to house everyone. But according to the employer, it's only a matter of time.

I made it very clear to the CRA Commissioner that his decision was not acceptable, and that our union and you, our members, would fight together to make him change his mind or, at the very least, to make the employer suffer the consequences of his actions towards its employees. To this end, **if the employer imposes a Work Arrangement Agreement (WAA) on you that does not suit you, I strongly encourage you to file an individual grievance against his decision, if you have not done so already.** I invite you to contact one of your local union representatives to get assistance in filing your grievance. We will also take other collective recourses against the CRA's decision.

Over the past few weeks, the main federal public service unions, including the PSAC, had called on their members to participate in Labour Day Parades and activities across the country on September 9 to make your discontent heard. UTE has joined this movement, and we will continue to organize



activities in workplaces and other locations to step up the pressure on the Agency and the federal government. We will also continue to denounce the employer's decision in the media.

We also denounced the decision to let go a couple of thousand of our members who used to work in Contact Centres, and the foreseeable negative impacts following this other bad decision by the employer, including a meteoric increase in waiting times and additional stress for those who still work there.

I'll say it again: the Canada Revenue Agency says it puts **People First**. But you know as well as I do that this is not true when it comes to its own employees.

Fall is shaping up to be a hot one. And I'm not referring to the weather.

Together, let's keep fighting for more respect, better working conditions and better workplaces. In closing, I would like to thank you once again for the excellent work you do and your ongoing dedication to the Canadian public.

In Solidarity,

Marc Brière
National President

PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA (PSAC) AND UNION OF TAXATION EMPLOYEES (UTE) WHO IS MY UNION?

Sometimes we're referred to as PSAC members, and sometimes as UTE members. What is that all about?

The PSAC is often called the "umbrella" under which all members fall. The PSAC represents members across Canada and around the world. Within the PSAC, members belong to different groups. Some are called components, and they are generally grouped according to the agency or department for which they work. For example: members who work for Veterans Affairs belong to the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees, and members who work for Customs belong to the Customs and Immigration Union. We all work for the Canada Revenue Agency, therefore, our component is the Union of Taxation Employees.

A member's main contact with the Union will normally be their UTE Local Executive Officers and Stewards. Stewards provide advice and guidance, represent members on grievances, and act as a liaison between members and the Local Executive. Local Executive Officers often also represent members in grievances.

UTE has a communication protocol that must be followed. If an issue arises that can't be resolved by the Steward, it is raised with the Local President, who will take steps to resolve it, if possible. If the issue is too complex or relates to something outside the Local's jurisdiction, it is elevated to the Regional Vice-President (RVP), who may liaise with CRA regional contacts, or consult with UTE Labour Relations Officers (LROs) to settle the issue. If this is not possible, it is referred to the UTE National Executive for resolution.

These steps must be followed:

Member => Steward/Local Executive Officer => Local President => RVP => LRO/National Executive.

If any steps are skipped, the issue will be referred to the level at which it should have been addressed and the Local President will be informed. ***Jumping the queue will not get you a faster response.***

Likewise, contacting the PSAC to resolve local issues will not provide you with a route to resolving them.

The PSAC provides high-level services, such as bargaining with the employer on our behalf. They represent our members in adjudication when grievances are unsuccessful, or the result achieved is unsatisfactory, at the first to fourth levels. They provide a broad range of education and Regional and National conferences. All other services are provided by UTE.

Locals hold Annual General Meetings (AGMs), regular Executive meetings, Member Appreciation Events, or other events within the Local. The AGM is the members' opportunity to connect with Local Executives, who will provide a report of the events of the past year. They will report on how resources were used and present a budget for the upcoming year. The budget provides the operating plan for the Local for the upcoming year. Members have the opportunity to review these documents and vote upon them.

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RVPs attend Local AGMs, generally accompanied by one of the three National Officers, namely the President, 1st Vice-President or the 2nd Vice-President. They also attend other Local events when invited and when approved. The RVP is a source of information and advice for Local Executives. RVPs present third-level grievances to the Assistant Commissioner and serve on National Committees, such as Health and Safety, Communications and Bargaining.

The National Executive Council ensures the component is run efficiently and in the manner approved by the delegates at the National Triennial Convention. National and Regional Conferences are held – Health and Safety, Equal Opportunity, and others approved at the National Convention. Education is provided Nationally and Regionally on a growing number of topics that pertain directly to UTE. Executive Council meetings are held four times per year and Local Presidents participate in two Presidents' Conferences per year.

Whether we're called PSAC members on the picket line or UTE members in our offices, we're all part of a vibrant organization that continues to fight the good fight for our members. If you are interested in being a part of leading the charge, contact your Local Executive!

Melanee Jessup
Communications Committee

WHAT GOOD IS A UNION?

I don't think there is anyone out there who hasn't heard the line "I don't need a union; their time has passed".

In the broader context, sure, the union movement has had arguably bigger impact through greater struggles in the past such as fighting child labour in mines, fighting for shorter working weeks, obvious health and safety improvements, etc., but does this mean that their purpose is no longer needed? Of course not. Putting aside increases in pay and benefits in a collective agreement for now, unions have been at the forefront of everyday improvements and protections.

Without unions, there would most certainly be no balance in power between the worker and the "corporate" bosses. No reasonable person can justify giving all the power to the corporate bosses. We have all heard the garbage arguments about keeping wages down for the "good of the economy" and the self-serving need for "higher profits". The anti-union types would have you believe that the employers are doing the workers a favour by employing them, and that without such brilliant CEOs the world would collapse if unions got too much power. In no case, other than the spin in corporate media, has it been shown that unions have the greater punch in the boxing ring of work-life balance and wage fights.



Unions were the ones who backed the fight for higher minimum wages. For example, higher wages for those in the service industry, result in a higher tax base, a better life for their children, food on the table, purchasing power in the local community, etc. This flies in the face of the argument that higher wages hurt the economy. Never has there been a more apparent widening of the gap between the rich

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and the worker. It's not just a matter of fairness, it's simply good for all. That is, except for the largesse inhering, yacht sailing, Monaco gambling, bread-price-fixing billionaire class; if their dividends and salary go down woe is them.

The media and a good deal of the population put the rich on a pedestal, as if we are to look up to them thinking "One day, just maybe if we play our cards right, we too can join their ranks". That is just not the way the system is built, and it will remain that way until a very unlikely flipping of the tables. If we are to believe that the bosses know what's best for us, we wouldn't have such benefits as parental leaves (some richer countries still don't have this, believe it or not). No society should hold their head high when a family can't have a house to call their own and a fridge full of food to ensure they and their kids can start the day nourished. Unions have been fighting for equality since they were born and will continue to do so.

There is so much more to unions than simply a collective agreement. During the pandemic can you imagine what would have happened to workers without the benefits of unions? Even front-line essential workers at grocery stores were given "hero pay". This was a small but well-deserved bump in pay for their commitment to their companies. Of course, according to the fat-cat bosses, they were only heroes for a bit and that pay ended – because it ate into their profits.

Unions affect legislation and politics. As our day-to-day lives are governed by legislation, workers and families need an advocate to protect us from the rising tides. Unions have been effective at lobbying for changes that benefit workers, not bosses, and that will be a never-ending battle as successive governments are equally, if not more, lobbied by the corporations and anti-worker organizations, and are frankly more welcomed by some governments. The balance unions fight for is not just helpful, but absolutely a necessity, especially at times when life is getting harder and more expensive for folks like you and me. The Westons, McCains and Coutus fortunes will be just fine – don't lose sleep over their dividends. The time for the worker to have a bigger slice of the pie is long overdue. In fact, the complete opposite is happening. There is a correlation between the growing advantage of the rich and the declining union density. That is a fact. Even non-unionized workers benefit from union advocacy, as the private non-unionized sector needs to offer wages and benefits to compete. The Amazons and Starbucks of the world don't fight unionization in their workplaces for a hobby. They do so because a successful organized workplace will make the difference between their 17 bedroom island paradise and a 15 bedroom island paradise.

Take care of each other, never stop fighting the power, involve yourself.

Adam Jackson
2nd Vice President

CRA 2024 WORKPLACE CHARITABLE CAMPAIGN

The CRA will be holding its Workplace Charitable Campaign again this fall.

We are encouraging our members to continue to donate to charitable organizations. You can do it through the CRA Charitable Campaign, or directly with the United Way, or to UTE's charitable organization of choice, the International Children's Awareness Canada (ICA) (see below).

At the National level, UTE will not participate with CRA in the official launch of the 2024 campaign. This decision was not taken lightly, but as a result of the current circumstances and challenges that we are facing with this employer.

Regional and local involvement will remain at the discretion of the respective representatives. If you need additional information on this matter, please contact your local executive.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AWARENESS (ICA) CANADA

International Children's Awareness (ICA) Canada is a small, non-profit organization committed to long-term development throughout countries in need. At any given time, ICA has a handful of projects being completed and is working to obtain funding to begin other projects. ICA projects help small community groups and families in developing nations.

ICA is a Canadian registered charity (Registration # 887858660RR0001). They are staffed entirely by volunteers, which means that 100% of donations go towards the projects and not salaries or administration costs.

We would like to ask our members to also get involved with this worthy organization by making their very generous donations either directly or through the CRA Charitable Campaign to ICA Canada.

HONOURS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

The Honours and Awards Committee met July 22-26 to review the scholarship applications that had been submitted for the 2024 calendar year.

The Committee has chosen the two National Scholarship recipients, one for the Robert "Bob" Campbell National scholarship, and one for the Diana Gee National scholarship, each in the amount of \$3,000.

There were also 10 regional scholarships awarded in the amount of \$1,500 each, and lastly there were ten scholarships sponsored by The Personal Insurance Group, each of the amount of \$1,000.

The recommendations of the committee must be presented to the Executive Council meeting taking place in late September, and once approved, all the successful candidates will be notified and the names of all the winners will appear in the December issue of Union News.

As a footnote, the committee wanted to advise that out of the 57 scholarship applications received, there were 16 disqualified for a variety of reasons. In the newsletter prior to the next scholarship deadline, we will highlight some of the issues and the committee will review the instructions included with the application form to ensure a lower disqualification rate.

Gary Esslinger,
Chair, Honours and Awards Committee

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that all address changes should be done online at <https://www.ute-sei.org/en/for-members/change-address> or via email to membership@ute-sei.org. If you do not have access to e-mail, please pass it on (with your PSAC ID) to a local representative or mail it directly to the National Office at 275 Bank Street, Suite 400, Ottawa ON K2P 2L6.